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Hundreds to Testify in First-Ever Public Hearing on California's Death Penalty *Hearing on Lethal Injection Will Set Next Steps for Capital Punishment in California*

SACRAMENTO—Today Californians will weigh in on the state's broken death penalty system in the first-ever public hearing on capital punishment methods in the state. Family members of murder victims, clergy, legal experts, wrongfully convicted individuals and concerned taxpayers from around the state will converge on Sacramento to register their objections to the new execution procedures at a public hearing by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. The hearing comes after three years without executions in California, and after legal challenges demonstrated systemic problems with the state's handling of executions in the past.

Despite having no method of execution for the last three years, California has spent hundreds of millions of dollars on the death penalty system, and stands poised to spend another \$1 billion over the next five years.

"The government is wasting money trying to come up with a new way to execute people while teachers, law enforcement and health care workers are being laid off," said Natasha Minsker, Death Penalty Policy Director for the ACLU of Northern California. "Prison officials have refused to disclose how much these executions will cost, even though the law requires them to do so."

After voicing their opinion on the execution procedures, concerned taxpayers will also call on the Governor to end the death penalty altogether and save the state millions. Taxpayers will deliver to the Governor a symbolic check for \$1 billion—the amount of money that the state would save in five years if the Governor converts all death penalty sentences to sentences of permanent imprisonment until death.

"With \$1 billion, we could keep crime labs working in places like Los Angeles, where they don't have enough money to test DNA evidence in rape cases," said Judy Kerr, spokesperson for California Crime Victims for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. "We need to use our scare resources to solve violent crimes like murder and rape. We can't afford to waste another cent

on a broken death penalty system that does not serve the needs of victims.” Kerr’s brother was murdered in 2003 and the case remains unsolved.

One year ago, the first comprehensive report on California’s death penalty was released by the bi-partisan California Commission on the Fair Administration. The Commission found that the death penalty costs taxpayers \$137 million each year, yet remains riddled with serious flaws, including a serious risk of wrongful execution and an appeals process that causes suffering to murder victim survivors. The Commission noted that state must also spend \$400 million to build a new death row facility. On the other hand, the Commission found that the alternative of permanent imprisonment for all those currently on death row would save \$125 million each year, while still protecting the public.

“One year after the Commission report, the system is just as dysfunctional and even more expensive,” said Stefanie Faucher, Program Director of Death Penalty Focus. “That’s why hundreds of diverse California residents are in Sacramento today to say loud and clear to the Governor and the Legislature: stop wasting our money on this failed system.”

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Live Twitter feed from the June 30 hearing at www.twitter.com/ACCADP, from the Alameda County Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty.